Philosophy of Librarianship Statement

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Ranganathan's elegant "5 Laws of Library Science" have served me well as a librarian because they echo my sense of
mission:

1. Books are for use.
2. Every reader his book.
4. Save the time of the user.
5. The library is a growing organism.

The laws bridge the past and future by underlining the enduring need for “books” -- “books,” of course, representing the
quest for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

As an academic librarian I work in - and think about - the intersection of information/ideas/research + people +
technology. I am specifically interested in how professors and students create, find, use, manipulate, filter, assemble,
manage, synthesize, conceptualize, distribute and mash up information and ideas.... and how librarians can support this
work, and/or collaborate in the production and preservation of research and ideas. As a professional I grew up with the
Internet. And now....

The Internet *is* the Library

“Everything is on the internet.” Some librarians feel threatened and defensive when they hear this. But really, it is a
restatement of Ranganathan’s Fifth Law: the library is a growing organism.

The Internet has fundamentally altered the characteristics and behaviour of information – and users of that information.
Information – once scarce and difficult to find - is now ubiquitous, abundant, ephemeral, primarily born digital, and does
not demand - or respond to - being managed in the old ways. People expect access 24/7. Digitally mediated
communication allows ideas and research to flow without the imprint of a traditional publisher. Multiple versions of
documents coexist and challenge librarians’ dreams of “universal bibliographic control.” Scholars and students find vast
quantities of information without going to a library or asking for a librarian’s help.

Librarians, once gatekeepers to scholarship, no longer own that role. What role DO we play? In seeking to answer that,
the question isn’t ‘what do libraries DO?’(a functional view)-- but rather ‘What are libraries FOR?’ Libraries exist to
improve society by ensuring public access to information, knowledge, ideas and creative works. Librarians are citizen
activists building public spaces and nodes (“libraries”) at the core of the Internet.

“... we cannot assume that the Internet will evolve in the citizen's favor without strong and sustained activism by people
who view themselves not as passive "users" but as citizens of the Internet.”

In the digital information ecosystem there is a need to balance dominant private corporations (google, apple) with
organizations dedicated to the public good (Ontario’s Scholars Portal, the Internet Archive, DOAJ, the Public Knowledge
Project and Wikipedia are examples.) The future is networked and is about connections.

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1 http://www.slais.ubc.ca/courses/lbr517/03-04-wt2/projects/ranganathan/contri.htm#five
A New Infrastructure for a Digital Information Ecosystem

Where scholarship goes, so academic libraries ought to go. Our fundamental challenge is developing a robust 21st century research/information infrastructure. It will include some elements from the past, and unimaginable new ones. The mission is enduring; the means to get there have to change. What is also clear is that librarians can no longer rely on conventional wisdom to solve the problems of digital information creation, dissemination and preservation.

I straddle the analog and digital information worlds by embracing some key strategies: radical collaboration; providing network-level services wherever possible; developing new scholarly publishing models; rethinking collection development; viewing service with a user experience framework; and developing innovative organizational structures and practices. I approach my work with a sense of urgency, but without being an alarmist. What underpins it is my unwavering commitment to excellent service and my constant striving to balance innovation with proven best practices.

I approach librarianship from a number of perspectives:

I am a believer.
I became a librarian because I believed that facilitating access to knowledge was a calling. I am motivated by the challenge of weaving together strategies, programs, services and user experiences which address these core values:

- service
- stewardship
- intellectual freedom
- privacy
- access to information as a public good
- appropriate use of technology
- critical thinking about information

I am an agnostic.
I do not flog any particular technology, solution or resource. I strive to work collaboratively to analyze problems and design appropriate solutions. Libraries need to encourage both right and left brained thinking or we risk having our good intentions, idealism and humility dissolve into hubris.

I am an unrepentant idealist. And a skeptic.
Idealism provides my fuel but it is not enough. Lots of people are idealists. Google’s corporate ethos is idealistic. As new business models, social institutions and economic realities emerge within the realm of digital scholarship, librarians must forge solutions which combine idealism with realism, imagination, sustainability, and compassion. And a healthy dose of skepticism. Multiple forces must be in play in order for ‘the best idea’ to succeed.

I am a reader.
I try to read broadly – within and well beyond library literature.

I am a steward.
Knowledge is a public good. It is also a commodity in the marketplaces of information, education and entertainment. Librarians have a social responsibility to represent the public interest in the emerging information landscape. My role as an individual is to keep that broader purpose in mind while working to understand and meet the needs of the community I serve. Librarians have a responsibility to take the ‘long view’ and grapple with stewardship for now, and for the future.
I am a generalist.
I have worked in several areas of librarianship including cataloguing, reference, liaison, instruction, collections, web development, interlibrary loans, circulation, and scholarly communication. I am interested in all aspects of librarianship and keep up on as many communities of practice as I can.

I am an ecologist.
A healthy information ecology is a diverse one. As an undergraduate at Trent University I was steeped in interdisciplinary studies and 'ecological thinking.' I still use this framework to understand the information landscape; to see the patterns of interrelatedness and interdependence in what appear, at first glance, to be separate pieces of a system, or individuals working in isolation. I think of librarianship as a “metadiscipline” because librarians borrow from all disciplines, celebrate ALL forms of knowledge, and understand that disciplines and methodologies evolve over time. We are the geologists in the information world, because we take the long view of information.

I am a manager. And a leader.
I strive to manage people, resources and projects effectively and with integrity and compassion. As a steward of public funds I take my fiscal accountability very seriously. I demonstrate leadership in some areas of practice. My style is collaborative and collegial. I try to balance evidence-based practice with bleeding edge innovation; each has its place. I’m not infallible. I have experienced many minor - and a few spectacular - failures in my career. I wish we talked more about failure in our profession. Openly. Honestly.

I am a mentor.
Mentoring functions as a kind of ongoing apprenticeship in our profession. I have benefited from the wisdom -- and help - of many mentors. I honor them by being a mentor when I can, by striving to inspire new librarians to flourish and make their unique contributions.